

XXII. *A Letter to Mr. William Watson, F. R. S. from Mr. Philip Miller, F. R. S. concerning a Mistake of Professor Gmelin, concerning the Sphondylium vulgare hirsutum of Caspar Bauhin.*

Read May 3, 1753. **I**N the abstract of the *Flora Sibirica*, which you laid before the Royal Society at their last meeting, there was mentioned, that the inhabitants of Siberia eat the stalks of the *Sphondylium hirsutum* C. B. P. But I have great reason to believe Professor Gmelin has mistaken the species: For he describes that plant as growing upward of six feet high; whereas the common sort (as you well observed) seldom rises much above half that height. Therefore I am of the opinion, that the plant mentioned by Professor Gmelin is that species, which Doctor Breynius mentions, in his second *Prodromus*, under the title of *Sphondylium maximum Transilvanicum Ricini folio*; the seeds of which I brought from Dr. Boerhaave's garden in the year 1727, where it was growing by the common sort of Caspar Bauhin, and in the same soil and situation was more than twice the height: and the same has continued in the growth of both these plants since, in the Chelsea-Garden; where the large sort constantly rises to a stem, at least a month sooner in the spring than the common sort, and the leaves are much larger, less divided, and not so hairy; so that there can be no doubt of their being distinct species. The leaves of both sorts I have sent for your inspection.

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The feeds of that species of Doctor Breynius I have received from Siberia, by the title of *Sphondylium vulgare*, and Doctor Boerhaave told me, he had received the feeds from Austria, Hungary, and Peterburgh, by the same name; so that it is certainly the common sort in those countries. And it is very usual to find many mistakes in the writers on botany; which has happened from their supposing, that the plants, which have been mentioned as common in one country, were the same with those of the country where they inhabited. An instance of this you well remember of the *Parietaria minor ocymi folio*. C. B. which is the only species found wild in England; and so was by all the English botanists taken for the *Parietaria officinarum* & *Dioscoridis* C. B. which are distinct species.

Many other instances might be mentioned of mistakes, which have arisen from the same supposition, were it necessary: but as you are so well acquainted with these things, so I shall not trouble you with the mention of any more at present, but remain,

S I R,

Chelsea, May 2,
1753.

Your most obedient humble servant,

Philip Miller.